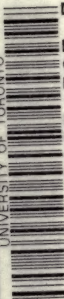


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Keohler, Thomas
Songs of a devotee

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1906



SONGS OF A DEVOTEE. BY
THOMAS KEOHLER.

THE TOWER PRESS BOOKLETS
NUMBER TWO
SONGS OF A DEVOTEE. BY
THOMAS KEORLER.

DUBLIN: MAUNSELL & CO., LTD.
60 DAWSON STREET.
MCMVI.

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SONGS OF A DEVOTEE.

Some of these Poems have already been printed in *The United Irishman*, *The Celtic Christmas*, *The Nationist*, and *New Songs* (O'Donoghue), 1904.

THE DEVOTEE.

THE Autumn wind sighs through the trees,
Disturbing all my garnered ease,
The brown leaves stir a fluttering thought
With half-repented memories fraught.
Dear God, how sweet the pain of sin,
That opens doors to let Thee in.

How strange that Nature too should know
The fading joy of sin's wild glow,
And with this knowledge lead my soul
To feel its union with the Whole.
And yet may God not thus impart
Himself unto the seeking heart ?

THANKSGIVING.

I THANK Thee, Lord, for rest and peace,
And all the silence of the night,
For solitude that reigns supreme
When day has vanished out of sight.

I thank Thee for the love that burns
And beats within the heart of night,
For joy and wonder that excel
The fervent rapture of the light.

For so I bear without reproach
The burden of the day's demands.
I bow a patient head and wait—
It is enough—night understands.

AUTUMN.

O SEASON of the sad reluctant leaves
That seek their last repose on earth's cold
 breast,

O let me hear the sorrows of thy voice
Calling all things to loveliness and rest.

In thy soft clouds grown grey with misery,
Thy desolate branches flaunting the gaunt
 skies,

Surely there dwells a sweetness of despair
For lonely hearts and weary tear-stained eyes.

For dumbly dressed, in sober light arrayed,
Breathing a sudden mystery and fear,
The poms and pageants of eternity
Loom through the withering ritual of the year.

THE CHALLENGE.

WAKE from thy sloth, arise, O sleeper,
Wake lest thy slumber grow yet deeper :
Lo ! I who call, I am thy keeper
Through the eternities.

And if thy trance may not be broken
By the loud challenge I have spoken,
Yet may I rouse thee by this token
Of thy divinity.

When I, the spirit, all undying
Wrestled with chaos, thy soft crying
Bade me to pause and see there lying
Child of my enterprise.

Now have the dreams of youth departed,
Now once again must thou be started,
Filled with the dreams of me strong-hearted
On the unending quest.

GREATER LOVE.

ONCE again the solemn night
Fills the world with rest,
Stretches out its arms of love,
Folds me to its breast.

And from out its great deep heart
Comes a quickening thrill,
As the Lord who fills its shades
Folds me closer still.

THE VISION.

Down the pathways of the day,
Where the fading light is lost,
Stands a figure calling me,
Wings upon its bosom crossed.

As I follow, light divine
Shines upon the way I tread.
Sun and stars are overthrown,
Glory everywhere is spread.

All the ruling spirits stand,
Grouped about the great white throne.
Then they mingle into one,
Naught is left save God alone.

THE TOWN BEYOND THE TREES.

I stood within the quiet woodland ways,
Listening for Love's forgotten melodies.
I heard them not, for all the earth was filled
With murmurings from the town beyond the
trees.

And so I prayed unto the bright-winged Lord
To send His music down the shining breeze,
That I might sing to those who toiled amidst
The murmurings of the town beyond the
trees.

No answer came, for O, I only brought
A heart half-haunted by Love's mysteries,
And all my ears were heavy with the sound
Of murmurings from the town beyond the
trees.

NIGHT.

DARK night that broods o'er fields and flowers
and hills,

Dark night of solemn clouds and wayward
shades,

O let me sleep, wrapped in thy still caress,

Thy child, dark night, with fields and flowers
and hills.

Dark night, with mystery clustered in the
trees,

Dark night, for whose embrace the branches
yearn,

I too stand yearning till I feel thy touch,

And know myself thy child, great-hearted
night.

DISINHERITANCE.

I WAS once the rightful master,
Now I sadly lurk within,
While the stern law hurls me faster
Through the pilgrimage of sin.

Yet I always faintly cherish,
In the whirl of time and chance,
This one truth that cannot perish—
My divine inheritance.

CONSOLATION.

I CANNOT speak to day's dull glare,
Or to the evening's twilight spell,
But to the still and dark-robed night
The passion of my soul I tell.

Unmoved it hears my wild words throb,
Then bending from its solitude,
It quells my tumult from its own
Infinity of quietude.

MEA CULPA.

I HAVE made a veil of sin
To restrain the blazing light
Rushing from the throne where sits
God, the Lord of good and right.

And the white light as it pours
Through the veil, to my surprise,
Changes into radiant hues
Grateful to my human eyes.

Thus I for my follies plead,
Saying, "Can it evil be
That can turn his blinding rays
Into glory I can see?"

SUPPLICATION.

A MURMERED sound of ecstasy
Is on the hills to-night,
A joy that cannot hide its head
In wonder and delight.

The trees stand silent as I pass,
Arms raised as if to bless.
The very grass beneath my feet
Sheds fragrant holiness.

But on I go with restless feet,
And heart oppressed with care,
Seeking some shrine where I may lay
A fragile gift of prayer.

O priestess of the silent hills,
Whereon the light of day
Clings, and the shadows of the night
Are half afraid to stay ;

Lead me unto thy secret place,
Where I may weep and pray,
So may the passion of the night
Absolve the sin of day.

UNREST.

THE night wind wanders through the trees,
Stirring the little murmuring leaves ;
The ancient stars look down and sigh
From lonely stations in the sky.

And God upon His throne, high-crowned,
With circling angels surging round,
Sighs for the wandering heart of man
He made—and lost—ere time began.

APOLOGY.

IN the garden of my youth,
Where the flowers' pale perfumes swayed,
Passion called me and I went
Fearfully, yet undismayed.

In the garden left my dreams
Of a life that might have grown
Silently to interweave
With the spirit world alone.

Why should I thus meekly yield
At the first sound of a voice,
At the beckoning of a finger
Rush like one without a choice?

Could the heart that nursed and reared
All my youth's pale bloom of dreams
Also bear this flaring foliage
With its blossoms' fiery gleams?

Surely not a chance desire
Lent my feet the will to go,
But a deeper thinking, sinking,
To the soul of things below :

But a deeper blending, twining,
With the bright ones on their way,

And a fiercer fire divining
In the buried heart of clay.

And as peace can ne'er be mine
Until every way is trod,
With a heart sincere I go
Passion's cloud-strewn path to God.

THE WAY OF LOVE.

LOVE is calling to me
From a way that is all unknown,
Bidding me fare right forth
Into gloomy paths alone ;
Gone is the dazzling light
That surged through the trembling day,
Idly its gleams now fall
On the straggling twigs by the way.

Weary and weak my limbs
And torn by the struggling briers,
Sad and perplexed my soul,
Confused by the twilight fires ;
Yet what are thy wounds, O Love,
And what are thy blinding tears,
But God who pleads with me,
And calls through the lonely years ?

THE CRY OF LOVE.

I DREAMED I moved within a withered glade,
And saw through shrunken boughs that cast
no shade

Dry fading skies where grief had spread its
wings,

And never a lonely cloud in sorrow clings.

And as I went dejected and oppressed,
Thinking that all the joy of life was passed,
Suddenly to my ears there came the cry
Of Love, a wanderer from the starry sky.

Cry to me, Love, once more that glad sweet
song,

Cry to me when earth's cares and sorrows
throng,

So may I reach near to thy burning breast,
And feel the lips of fire upon mine pressed.

FRIENDSHIP.

WHEN the pale twilight minarets are laid low,
And sunset's burnished roof of gold falls in,
I stand unawed amidst the shadowy din,
Crowned with the shattered daytime's fading
glow.

And in defiance of all earthly bars,
Of huge despair and grief without avail,
I stretch fierce hands of friendship forth and
hail
The eternal exultation of the stars.

RESTORATION.

GIVE me back, white stars of heaven, your
light,
That I gave you long ago,
Ere you swung to view from the realms of
night,
With a rush and pearly glow.

Give me back white breasts that sear my soul,
Give me back your whiteness too,
For the day that it fell from God's control,
It belonged to me—not you.

Give me back aged earth's maturity,
What you gained as the ages flew,
For out of a passion of purity
My heart gave it all to you.

SONG.

I WOULD swathe thee in hues of the orient,
 Queen,
Or sun-dancing sheen of the waves,
I would build thee a palace of ivory, Queen,
With heroes and gods for slaves.

I would give thee all these and a thousandfold
 more
If I were but free as of old,
But my will is adrift on the sea of desire,
And love is a tale untold.

VAGRANCY.

THE old gray roads before me stretch,
And stretching ever call to me,
To find a passion and a quest
In everlasting vagrancy.

And I have bound myself to them,
My heart, my will, my restless soul,
To tramp for ever till I reach
The incommunicable goal.

ADORATION.

THE light of day is almost done,
The clouds with one accord
Stretch feeble hands to magnify
The glory of the Lord.

And I an alien stand aloof,
Outcast from prayer and praise.
I stretch weak hands, then turn again
To tread my sin-stained ways.

THE RECREANT.

AH God, I sought from human hands
The comfort that should come from Thine,
And from the lips that fade and die
The ecstasy of life divine.

Now once again I turn to Thee,
A recreant broken by my sin,
Drawn by Thy love that like a flame
Burns everlastingly within

GIFTS.

TAKE all the transient things of earth
That die or ever they are born—
The twilight with its dream of gold,
The trembling beauty of the morn.

Go take them, bear them in thy hand,
Lay them before the meanest heart,
And thou shalt find enshrined therein
Their everlasting counterpart.

WIND AND SEA.

O FIERCE and rushing sea, O clamorous wind,
Speak to my rebel heart, speak and be kind,
For I am near to thee by closest ties
Of kinship, and by love that never dies.

Give me, impetuous sea, thy wild strong heart,
Give me, O surging wind, thy furious art—
Eternal warriors on the passionless sky,
Whom death dare touch not, nor decay come
nigh.

And yet I know, O wind, O shuddering sea,
I have one boon which God denies to thee ;
Ye must rage on eternally, nor cease,
For me, for me alone is death's glad peace.

THE SEEKING SOUL.

HER heavy eyes are bending over me,
Filled with her sad soul's lustreless disdain ;
They bend and cover me with love's own
fire—

I know not whether it is joy or pain.

Ah ! God, they say, Thou dost in all things
dwell,

Thy love and power are everywhere expressed,
Quick, let me find Thee in these heavy eyes,
This falling hair, this quiet-breathing breast,

SUCCOUR.

ONCE more the burden of the world
Is laid on shoulders all too frail,
Once more the brain and body strained
By unaccustomed labours fail;

And he who stood at break of day
All radiant with the sun's delight,
Seeks now, ere half the day is done,
The comfort and repose of night.

O soul, seek out some lonely place,
Where dwells the spirit of the Lord,
And multitudinous mingling leaves
Murmur their joys with one accord :

So shalt thou feel His glad strong hands,
Raise high the burden of the days,
And thou shalt turn to life again
Filled with imperishable ~~fame~~ *praise*.

THE BALLAD OF A MAN DISTRAUGHT.

THE young men sport in the fields with glee,
They are full of the lust of life, I see ;
But I pass by with a mind distraught,
And seek for that which to them is naught.

The curse of Cain is upon my brow,
I can neither dig, nor reap, nor plough ;
But I search always with grief untold,
Nor know the thing that my heart would hold.

The Priests and Elders of my tribe
Held out their hands with a goodly bribe,
And they said : "If you come and live with us,
With raiment and food you'll be right joyous."

But I shook my head and held aloof,
For I feared the touch of the cloven hoof ;
I will worship and pray as I wish, I said,
And God will look after me when I'm dead.

Then the young girls came with their looks
of love,

And hands as soft as the gray-winged dove,
And amidst their babble and laugh I thought
I should find the thing for which I sought.

But they said : "What can this strange man
need ?

He gives us kisses and love indeed ;

But his heart is full of loneliness,
And chill as death is his arms' caress."

So I bowed my head and went my way,
And knew that my fate must be alway
To wander and rove till the day of doom
With a heart of fire and a face of gloom.

But often when all is bleak and cold
I lift my voice with a joy untold,
For I see the heart of the world's despair
Shot through and through with a golden glare :

And I think how some day I shall know
What I seek for going to and fro,
For the secret lies in a fairy town
Away in the sunset's going down.

I shall enter in at its golden gate
With a purple pomp and regal state,
I shall seat myself on the throne of thrones
Built from the martyred saints' white bones,
And then with a thunderous burst and blaze
I'll question the Ruler of nights and days—
But my water-can is running dry,
I must fill it in this brook near by.

SONNET

WHEN the last star died down and love was
done,

And the old world a solemn aspect wore,
When naught was left to worship or adore,
Save the last memory of the regal sun ;
When death's last darkened chaos was begun,
And howling winds about the wild world tore,
Drowning the hollow sea's tempestuous roar
With turmoil of a victory almost won ;
Even then my soul, as a soft curling spray
That flutters o'er a rock-strewn sea-bound
coast,

Whispered a message of the coming day,
That ever hovers like a dawn-fed ghost,
Waiting till time and all his changeling host
Fall dead before its unimagined ray.

SONNET.

OLD spendthrift Time, old juggler and old fool,
Who wastes the hoarded wisdom of my youth,
Whereby I thought to trap the inviolate truth,
And plumb the unfathomed depths of life's
dark pool ;

Old whimperer, get you back again to school,
Although thy wizened jaw holds not a tooth,
And learn that man, poor trembling man,
forsooth,

Laughs at thy proud pretensions and thy rule.
And yet, O Time, until the end of days
Thou art the master. Driven by thy blows,
The soul, a sad wayfarer, comes and goes,
Faltering upon life's heavy-burdened ways,
And voiceless lifting to the aged skies
The unuttered yearning of reproachless eyes.

SONNET

LORD, thou hast called me in the lonely
groves

Soft-liveried in the dying gleams of day,
And thou hast told me of Thy hidden way,
Where never a trembling wind of passion
roves,

Or perfumed breath of citron or of cloves
Disturbs the silence of the souls that pray,
Seeking for ever Love's eternal ray
That only in Thy being lives and moves.
And I had thought, O Lord, to walk therein,
Listening for ever to Love's muffled toll,
But always round me my besetting sin
Spreads the foul treachery of unbelief—
And I am lost in wandering paths of grief,
The black-winged night of sorrow in my soul.

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